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Katherine Metzo

"Evil's Scandalous Logic": Genocide and the Legitimacy of the State

It's not really a mass murder. It is individual murder, person by person, that becomes mass murder.

—David Scheffer, Deputy Secretary of State for War Crimes

Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union, Pol Pot's Cambodia, former-Yugoslavia and Kosovo, and contemporary Rwanda are all cases where the use of violence is taken beyond the necessities of war. Such uses of violence are not considered legitimate because they violate international ethics and therefore are declared war crimes. That is, violence neither for the protection of borders, nor for the struggle for independence, nor for the acquisition of new land. Violence is used with the intent of annihilating a particular Other. While scholars have focused primarily on reactions to genocide, the same degree of attention has not been given to the calculated logic behind these mass murders, nor the personalized nature perpetuated in these crimes. The intimate and dehumanizing nature of these war crimes is

often part of the logic behind them. How can we explain this logically organized, extreme violence in our modern, civilized, and rational world of nation-states? Backwardness. Evil. Those of us living in post-industrial countries believe that we live in a "civilized," "modern," and "moral" world and therefore we see genocide as an aberration. Such violence is seen as random and illogical. Violence, however, is being brought upon people by their own leaders in a detached, calculated way, not randomly.

To write on the subject of genocide as a tool for the creation of a homogeneous "nation" has been challenging for several reasons, not the least of which is the discomfort it brings. My own interest in this topic goes back to 1991, during my first trip to Europe, but it has been cultivated by many other observations, experiences and professional interests. Walking through Auschwitz my thoughts ran from shock to horror to amazement. What caused the silence and what was the logic at work behind the systematic and rationally calculated murders of millions of people? We in the modern industrialized nations are appalled by what we see as evil, grotesque and unjust, and therefore we search for a simple answer to put our minds at ease. It could never be that "rational," "civilized," "modern" humans could execute such a "rational, carefully calculated design... [free of] contingency and chance, and independ[ent] from group emotions and personal motives" (Bauman 91). But that is exactly what happened in the Holocaust and in Stalinist USSR and it is happening again in Bosnia.

This paper is one attempt to come to terms with issues of genocide, the state, and modernity. I will begin with a discussion of political anthropological theory and the "modern" nation-state. Then I will look more particularly at the work of Zygmunt Bauman on the Holocaust and Robert Hayden on ethnic cleansing and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Finally, I will examine the case of ethnic cleansing as genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Modernity and the creation of nation-states have by no means resulted in the elimination of extreme violence. On the contrary, *genocide has been used as a tool by leaders of modern, civilized nation-states to transform the state through the homogenization of a target nation, and thereby legitimate the state's power and authority over that nation.*

Nations, States, and Nationalism

While unilinear evolution implies that every culture takes the same route and arrives at the same end, i.e., the state, the multi-lineal model admits that societies or groups progress at different rates and in different ways, but there remains the ethnocentric notion that the highest point is still the civilized, modern state. Neither of these evolutionary

models help us to deal with the reality of genocide. Genocide, a systematic annihilation of a population "in whole or part," seems to be, in reality, a construction of civilization (or states, in the second model). Both the earlier unilinear models and the later multi-lineal evolutionary models were flawed because of their inherent hierarchical nature and ethnocentrism.

Steadman Upham's edited volume of essays on the unilinear evolutionary model (bands—tribes—chiefdoms—states) proves insightful, but insufficient in terms of renegotiating the evolutionary hierarchy. All of the authors in this volume revisit the evolutionary model and try to find ways in which it can be useful to contemporary scholars. To some degree they are successful, but none of the authors deal specifically with the nature of violence through this evolutionary progression. Though the ability to use force is a commonly recognized characteristic of states, the authors here do not examine the use of force to legitimate state authority. Most of the authors also continue to talk about societies in terms of their own homogeneity and limited contact with other groups.

Stephen Plog declares that, "the environment *does* play a part in selecting social responses that result in changes in political systems" (177). He continues by warning that this statement alone can lead to environmental possibilism and that his intent is to investigate regional patterns of change (178). He successfully supports his modest goal. However, even after looking at the arguments of other authors in this collection regarding social and political change and the evolution of the state, it is not clear that evolutionary theory can inform a serious understanding of the logic of genocide.

Extrapolating from theories which support the evolutionary model, there are several explanations and questions which come up. First, one might claim that genocide is about the problem of disputed territory. According to the traditional evolutionary models, the state is made up of smaller polities (tribes, chiefdoms, etc.) which have evolved into a new centralized, stratified structure. Therefore conflicts over land occur with other states, not within the state. This issue is complicated, of course, by the concept of nation, which I discuss below. Second, one could argue that genocide is the result of a classic Malthusian check—a social response to extreme population pressure. However, if Netting is correct in combining the theories of Malthus and Boserup in an iterative model of political and technological evolution, a new question arises. How do we explain the fact that, rather than using elaborate technology to feed the population, the Nazis used elaborate technology to exterminate millions of people?

Zygmunt Bauman writes of the concern over the use of technology for murderous ends in a modern, civilized state.

Like everything else done in the modern—rational, planned, scientifically informed, expert, efficiently managed, coordinated—way, the Holocaust left behind and put to shame all its alleged pre-modern equivalents, exposing them as primitive, wasteful and ineffective by comparison. Like everything else in our modern society, the Holocaust was an accomplishment in every respect superior, if measured by the standards that this society has preached and institutionalized. It towers high above the past genocidal episodes in the same way as the modern industrial plant towers above the craftsman's cottage workshop, or the modern industrial farm, with its tractors, combines and pesticides, towers above the peasant farmstead with its horse, hoe and hand weeding. (Bauman 89)

Here Bauman also invokes the familiar rhetoric of primitive versus modern, rational and planned versus wasteful and ineffective. At first, he emphasizes what it means to be modern through this list of adjectives. To emphasize the hierarchical nature of the unique relationship between modernity and genocide, he uses phrases such as, "left behind," and "put to shame." Though mass murder has occurred historically, the uniqueness of the Holocaust (as well as cases of genocide since the Holocaust) lies in the fact that it occurred in the "modern world." By using the rather banal agricultural example which he gives at the end of this quote, he illustrates the mentality of modernity's evolutionary superiority.

In discussing the nation-state, still more difficulties arise in understanding the logic behind genocide. The definition of nation-state generally requires that state boundaries be contiguous with those of a particular "nation" (Anderson; Gellner; Seton-Watson); the singular "nation" set in quotes because of the multiple ways in which populations create "imagined communities" which become nations (Anderson). Kedourie claims that the nation-state instead emerges out of a movement for social justice. Whatever the *purpose* of the nation-state, nations are typically *identified* based on a common language, shared religion, and collective historical memory. The nation-state, as current ethnic strife throughout the former Communist bloc attests, has become the idealized form of the state.

One of the problems with the nation concept is the need for a "massive effort at symbolic construction, of creating a sense of unity, of identification" (Kertzer 179). Zdzislaw Mach reiterates this idea, but with an even more overt political connotation (Mach). Mach states that identity formation is a symbolic and dynamic process but also one in which power dynamics within the group play a major role (x). Anthony Smith claims that modern nations are descended from a primordial ethnic

group and that authentic ethnic myths serve the purpose of legitimating the nation. Katherine Verdery takes a different approach to understanding ethnic myths and political maneuvering in post-Socialist countries. Through the selective retelling of ethnic myths and the exhumation of pre-socialist cultural heroes, the elites in Eastern Europe are constructing and legitimating a new collective identity, not one based on a primordial ethnic community.

Building the Soviet State during the early part of this century offers an example of how collective histories and nation-like qualities are manipulated to create a new identity. Stalin's intentions were two-fold in creating the Soviet State. First, he needed to eliminate political competition from political heretics (those who didn't follow the party line), *kulaks* (private landowners), professors, and others who might oppose the new regime (Deker and Lebed). Second, he needed to destroy or consolidate homogeneous national groups. Stalin's methods for carrying out these goals included: show trials and executions, population transfers (separating people from their "homeland"), famine and the eradication of local cultural traditions by sending children to boarding schools and encouraging intermarriage with Russians. One of the ways in which anthropologists aided in the homogenization of the "Soviet people" was through their work on early censuses: silently integrating smaller ethnic groups into larger ones or dividing more vocal indigenous groups into smaller ones or consolidating them with surrounding groups (Hirsch). "It was proof of Stalin's ability as an administrator that his hold over the party was discovered only when it could no longer be effectively challenged... In this contest he drew on all the advantages of his cold-blooded endurance and superior craftiness in a game where everybody played for the highest stakes" (Von Laue 142). As an "administrator," Stalin was the highest caliber bureaucrat, in Bauman's sense of dictating and implementing a plan of destruction in detached, rational, and mechanical fashion.

Anthropologist Robert Hayden provides an illustrative example of how the nation-state concept can be problematic:

The key to the separate nationalist political movements in Yugoslavia after 1989 was the explicit conflation of the "nation," ethnically defined, and the "state." Although this formulation was hardly new to European history, it did have sinister implications for minorities in states that were suddenly defined as the nation-states of their respective ethnic majorities. By definition, anyone not of the majority ethnic-nation could only be a citizen of second class. (*American Ethnologist* 787)

Communist Yugoslavia as a "nations-state" (that is, a true multi-national state) had been lauded as a success story after the tumultuous history of the Balkans. However, following centuries of non-democratic

rule, the constituent nations of Yugoslavia began to participate more in the politics of their own state, a multi-national state. The separatist politicians who became leaders in the post-Soviet period used the rhetoric of the nation-state to define their independent states and bring them into existence. This creation of a nation-state requires the construction of a legitimate notion of "nation-state." This was especially challenging to do when so many families saw themselves as Yugoslavs or were members of mixed families (Hayden, *American Ethnologist*; Woodward; Denitch). Hayden goes on to say that the winners of the 1990 elections rewrote their constitutions following the nation-as-state model, thus limiting the participation of non-nationals (*American Ethnologist*).

Genocide

Even the concept of modernity itself is drawn into question when examining genocide. All of the examples presented here take place within *modern* Europe. If the modern is *rational, civilized, scientific*, and Europe contains the quintessential modern nation-state, then how can there be genocide in Europe? Shock and disbelief are common among Bosnians who never expected the violence which descended upon them (Rieff; Smajlovic). People considered themselves modern and therefore such atrocities could not happen to them. Rieff talks of Bosnian disinterest in Rwandan tragedies as somehow being not quite so incredible. That is, the case of genocide in Africa is more easily dismissed as Africa is not "modern," like Europe. This is yet another barrier to developing an understanding of how genocide is constructed and carried out. Genocide is neither a direct nor ultimate result of modernity, rather it is a product of modernity (Todorov; Bauman). Auschwitz is not, "the ineluctable—if somewhat premature—outcome of modernity, whose truth is at last revealed. Moreover, if the term modernity can encompass realities as divergent as democracy and totalitarianism, one must wonder how useful the term really is" (Todorov 29). It is easy to dismiss that which does not fit into our normative notions, it is much more difficult to try to fit the anomalies into our explanation of how the system works.

Yet, the concepts of modernity and the nation-state are closely intertwined.

The permanent and irremedial homelessness of the Jews was an integral part of their identity virtually from the beginning of their diasporic history. Indeed, this fact was used as a main argument in the Nazi case against the Jews, and was employed by Hitler to substantiate the claim that hostility against the Jews is of a radically different kind from ordinary antagonisms between rival nations or races. (Bauman 35)

Here Bauman refers to the de-territorialized character of the Jewish nation. Primordial rights to land are such a large claim to sovereignty among many ethnic groups (in Chechnya and Chiapas, for example) that the Jewish dispossession offered "nation" as an exceptional case. Bauman claims that this lack of a tie to a concrete piece of land is an integral part of Jewish identity. Everywhere they went, they were the Other. And in the case of Hitler's Germany, this Otherness was used to instill fear, distrust, and/or hatred into German public discourse. Hitler set up the image of the Jews as undermining the German nation. Thus, he was able to legitimate an offensive against Jews in defense of his image of the Aryan nation-state.

Can genocide then be seen as a form of nationalism? To some extent, I would claim that it is a form of nationalism. There is a connection between the act of genocide and the state-centered construction of nationalism. For example, the Nazi goal of creating an Aryan race, an extreme "imagined community" (Anderson), is a clear example of nationalism, but nationalism *precedes* genocide. Conversely, nationalism is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for genocide. However, I do see a connection between acts of genocide and the process of state-building whether or not this includes nationalism. The use of genocide by Hitler or Stalin is of interest because it marks an attempt at eliminating resistance, creating homogeneity.

Definitions are almost always contestable, therefore I will briefly outline what I mean by genocide using the United Nations definition as well as using parts of Bauman's definition. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was written in response to the Holocaust. Article II of the convention defines genocide in the following manner:

... genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (Chalk and Jonassohn 44)

Several of the key words in the definition are "intent" and "or in part" which suggests that genocide needs to be neither successful nor complete to be considered a crime. Though the authors of the convention

specify "national, ethnic, racial or religious group," the victims of genocide could indeed be of a less commonly recognized, though clearly marked, group (e.g. homosexuals, handicapped). In terms of what qualifies as genocide, except for (a) and (e) the definition is sufficiently ambiguous. "Conditions of life" is the phrase which provides the widest interpretation in what qualifies as genocide. Reservations, sub-standard public housing, and environmental racism² all potentially fit the description, though they would remain highly contestable. Even the arguments that genital mutilation and rape in the former Yugoslavia qualify as both "serious bodily or mental harm" and "measures intended to prevent births" are contested in the official political discourse (Borneman; Stojavljevic; Stiglmaier).

The first group of countries to ratify the convention included: Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, Haiti, Liberia, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippine Republic, United States of America, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. In total, forty-three countries ratified the convention, however Germany, Rwanda, and Cambodia were not among them. "If [the expert commission definition of ethnic cleansing is] taken seriously, [this] means that genocide has been a tool for building a number of nation-states that are now honorable members of the world community" (Hayden, *Slavic Review* 732). One must wonder, then, whether it is really significant to look at who did or did not ratify the convention. These states may argue that global conditions have changed in such a way that transnationalism and globalism are now the norms and genocide or ethnic cleansing are no longer legitimate tools of state formation (see Basch, et. al.).

The United States further specifies in its ratifying statement that "mental harm" be taken to mean "permanent impairment of mental faculties through drugs, torture or similar techniques". Though the intent by the US Congress was to remove ambiguities, I feel that the result is the direct opposite. "Impairment" can be very severe, requiring continuous hospitalization, or it can be at the level of having "night terrors" (a common affliction among war veterans). It is not clear to what degree such mental impairment must take place. Also, the phrase "similar techniques" leaves a very open window for interpretation. Again, the role of victimized person's perceptions in determining genocide is not clear when one reads "torture or similar techniques." The dehumanizing acts of genital mutilation and forced sex acts between prisoners and Serbian soldiers in Bosnia are intended to demoralize the opposition, but these acts have not always been recognized by the international community as a form of torture (Borneman 293).

In contrast to the definition provided by the United States or the United Nations, Zygmunt Bauman's definition of genocide is more de-

scriptive in terms of selecting the most salient aspects of the UN Convention through the legal rhetoric:

'Ordinary' genocide is rarely, if at all, aimed at the total annihilation of the group; the purpose of the violence (if the violence is purposeful and planned) is to destroy the marked category (a nation, a tribe, a religious sect) as a viable community capable of self-perpetuation and defense of its own self-identity. If this is the case, the objective of the genocide is met once (1) the volume of violence has been large enough to undermine the will and resilience of the sufferers and to terrorized them into surrender to the superior power and into the acceptance of the order it imposed; and (2) the marked group has been deprived of resources necessary for the continuation of the struggle. (119)

Bauman's definition is in some ways far clearer than the highly politicized UN definition. He states at the outset that total annihilation is usually not the goal, perhaps questioning whether or not it is actually possible. The intent of genocide is to destroy the viability of a marked group. Bauman says that, first, the violence must be great enough to "undermine" the ability of the victims to resist. This interpretation encompasses the qualifications under the UN Convention while also removing some of the ambiguity over the degree of violence necessary in determining genocide. When I refer to genocide throughout this paper, I will be using the UN definition in the sense of Bauman's interpretation.

The Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing

In his 1989 book, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman attempts to show the Holocaust as a product of modernity by revealing the precise logic behind it and rejects the general consensus that the Holocaust was a "cancerous growth on the body of civilized society" (viii). His goal in undertaking this effort is to see what unique contributions can be made to the study of the Holocaust by sociologists. "The Holocaust was an outcome of a unique encounter [which] could be blamed to a very large extent on the emancipation of the political state, with its monopoly of means of violence and its audacious engineering ambitions, from social control" (xiii). The encounter here is between everyday factors at play in the modern world. The state, being the most highly centralized (or evolved) political form, has, as Bauman puts it, a "monopoly of means of violence."

Though the Holocaust ended with the extermination of Jews, its beginnings were rooted in the purification of the German race through the sterilization and murder of handicapped populations (Friedlander). The rhetoric of purification (or homogenization) continued throughout each new stage of violence against the Jews (Hinton; Friedlander). The term "ethnic cleansing" parallels Hitler's rhetoric of a disease which

threatened the integrity of the German state. It was very easy for Hitler to target Jews because of their migratory history.

By the very fact of their territorial dispersion and ubiquity, the Jews were an inter-national nation, a non-national nation. Everywhere, they served as a constant reminder of the relativity and limits of individual self-identity and communal interest, which the criterion of nationhood was meant to determine with absolute and final authority. Inside every nation, they were the 'enemy inside'. The boundaries of the nation were too narrow to define them; the horizons of national tradition were too short to see through their identity. *The Jews were not just unlike any other nation; they were also unlike any other foreigners.* (Bauman 52)

Jews were clearly part of a nation, albeit a divided and migratory one. This questioned the entire notion of nation-state. The idea of a "trans-national nation" was very threatening to Hitler and he aimed to eliminate this Other which he could not define. "In defining the legitimate borders of the nation, all kinds of mutually contradictory arguments are used" (Denitch 82). This is as true of Germany as it is of Yugoslavia (about which this passage was written). In the process of defining a nation, contradictions arose over the right of Jews to live on land where they had been for hundreds of years, and matters of that nature. By declaring the Jews a non-nation, their rights to citizenship and ownership were eliminated.

Bauman argues that during the Holocaust there was a bureaucratization of violence:

Stalin's and Hitler's victims were not killed in order to capture and colonize the territory they occupied. Often they were killed in a dull mechanical fashion with no human emotions—hatred included—to enliven it. They were killed because they did not fit, for one reason or another, the scheme of a perfect society. Their killing was not the work of destruction, but creation. (92)

The lack of emotion on the part of the killers and the "scheme" which was being enacted reflects this notion of bureaucratization. Technology and science, including anthropology (Friedlander), were instrumental in making the killing process detached and mechanical. Planning of "cool, thorough and systematic genocide" was made possible because "modern, rational society paved the way" (Bauman 90; see also, Todorov). The bureaucratic system also successfully dehumanized the victims of the Holocaust, to the point that every last bit of property which might mark their identities was taken away at the anteroom to the gas chamber at Auschwitz (Wollenberg; Bauman).

Destroying the Other as an act of creation rather than of destruction is a very difficult concept to grasp. Bauman more clearly outlines what he means by "creation" a bit further on:

They were eliminated, so that an objectively better human world—more efficient, more moral, more beautiful—could be established. A Communist world. Or a racially pure, Aryan world. In both cases, a harmonious world, conflict-free, docile in the hands of their rulers, orderly, controlled. People tainted with ineradicable blight of their past or origin could not be fitted into such unblemished, healthy and shining world. Like weeds, their nature could not be changed. They could not be improved or reeducated. They had to be eliminated for reasons of genetic or ideational heredity—of a natural mechanism, resilient and immune to cultural processing. (92-93)

Though I differ with Bauman's use of the term "objectively," I do not doubt that this is how Stalin and Hitler perceived their goals. Considering again the process by which nations are created, Bauman suggests that Aryan and Communist notions of inferiority were drawn from their perception that reform was impossible for some groups: namely Jews, Gypsies, and the handicapped. These "others" threatened the formation of the ideal homogeneous state and are figured in its rhetoric as sub-human. Though a genetic argument was not as prevalent in Stalinist propaganda, as I will show below, the notions of "purity" and "unalterable natures" were common.

In two articles from 1996, Hayden looks at ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia both to analyze how it is used in self-determination or state-building and to understand the logic behind it. Against the explanations of ethnic fighting and genocide as resulting from long repressed nationalism, Hayden argues:

that the wars have been about the forced unmixing of peoples whose continuing coexistence was counter to the politician ideologies that won the free elections of 1990. Thus extreme nationalism in the former Yugoslavia has not been only a matter of imagining allegedly 'primordial' communities, but rather of making existing heterogeneous ones unimaginable. (*American Ethnologist* 783)

Hayden points out the contradiction between the notion of the nation-state, which requires imagining a homogeneous community, and the reality of the heterogeneous republics of the former Yugoslavia. The "unmixing" (homogenization) was possible because the existence of heterogeneity was challenged, made "unimaginable." Ethnic cleansing, says Hayden, is a result not only of forcible transfers and murder, but also of "bureaucratic discrimination" (784). One of the other bureaucratic means of discrimination which directly lead to ethnic-cleansing and which I mentioned above was the creation of a nation-state, institutionalized through new constitutions in 1990.

Hayden's second article "Schindler's Fate," is much more controversial in terms of its acceptance into the academic community (*Slavic Review*). In it, Hayden eliminates the distinction between "population

transfers," "ethnic cleansing," and genocide. The degree of violence is not of concern, rather the motivations and logic behind it. He claims that the efforts by Czechs after the war to expel Germans from Czechoslovakia was an intent to destroy the German population "in whole or in part" (729). Hayden makes this controversial statement to lead into his argument that, "the crimes of the Holocaust provide a rhetorical structure that lends itself to justifying the process that it professes to abhor" (730). He argues that many countries have used ethnic cleansing to promote their own legitimacy in the international arena and are now well-respected states. However, this does not excuse the present violence being perpetrated in Bosnia. Rather, Hayden takes this approach to show that genocide or ethnic cleansing is a tool which states use to create legitimacy.

Such objectivity in analyzing the events during and after the Holocaust is difficult to come by and has caused Hayden's work to be severely critiqued. "Schindler's Fate" was followed by several commentaries and a response by Hayden (see commentaries by Lilly; Woodward; and Wallace in Hayden, *Slavic Review*). In the critiques of Hayden, several of the authors claim that he is doing something very dangerous by ignoring or understating the moral implications of ethnic cleansing, population transfers, and genocide. These authors do not seem to agree that these terms are all referring to degrees of the same process. Lilly goes as far as claiming that Hayden's work is immoral and unethical. The other authors agree that such an analysis needs to take place, but caution against comparisons which compare different regions and different policies. While Hayden is searching for a broader theoretical concept to understand the logic of genocide, his critics argue that context is the only way to understand the policies and actions in each case.

Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo

Recent work on the former Yugoslavia by Hayden has caused more than a little tension in post-Communist studies. Hayden, however, remains unwavering in his attempts to come to terms with the logic behind large scale ethnic violence. In this way, his work is very similar to that of Bauman as an attempt by a social scientist to understand genocide from within the framework of a discipline which has avoided this material for a long time.

Conflict in Bosnia has brought forth numerous interpretations of the fall of Yugoslavia. Some focus on primordial ethnic conflict, others on the nature of the violence and the significance that has for the nature of the ethnic hatred, but these explanations do not give a clear understanding of what is going on behind the genocide (Denitch). On the

other hand, there are also studies which take a more holistic look at the events surrounding the fall of Yugoslavia. Misha Glenny, Susan Woodward, and Tone Bringa provide such studies. Glenny continually points to the fact that it is not merely a pre-communist ethnic rivalry, but rather a combination of the romanticization of national pasts, "memories" of conflicts before and during the Hapsburg and Ottoman reigns, the constituent republics and, most importantly, the events of the communist period. Glenny, a journalist, focuses primarily on the communist period, especially the events which directly lead to the civil/international war.

...the very mechanism which brought such a swift end to enmity between Serbs and Croats in 1945 had been the suppression of all national political rights: Serb, Croat, Macedonian, Albanian, Hungarian, Italian, Moslem, and Slovene alike. Individual national identity was consumed by the all-purpose Yugoslav ideal which enjoyed a strong appeal among many for sustained periods of the Titoist state. (Glenny 12)

Throughout the early years of the war large numbers of people, especially in Bosnia, still self-identified as "Yugoslavs" and many were children or partners in mixed marriages (Hayden, *American Ethnologist*; Bringa). Throughout the fighting there has been a need to place blame somewhere, to identify and punish the perpetrators (Bauman also talks of this in the German context). However, Glenny also warns that by each side using the "atrocities" of the other to justify their own violent behavior, the reciprocity of violence will continue.

Susan Woodward argues against the idea that some sort of atavistic relations exist between the constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia, as well. "The Yugoslav conflict is inseparable from international change and interdependence, and it is not confined to the Balkans but is part of a more widespread phenomenon of political disintegration" (3). She, like Glenny, points out that this disintegration has happened under a particular set of circumstances and over a long period of time. However, her argument fails to understand the logic behind the genocide. She does not draw any conclusions about the relationship between the political disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the use of genocide to legitimate the homogeneous nation-states that are to replace it.

Borneman also presents the conflict in the former Yugoslavia as the struggle between two modern Western European political principles—"the creation of sovereign peoples conceived as culturally homogeneous, self-constituting majorities within a nation form, and homogeneous, self-constituting majorities within a nation form and the assertion of this sovereignty through territorial control in a state" (276). Borneman's focus in the study of genocide in the former Yugoslavia is based on dehumanization, the production of permanent "bodily and

mental harm" through sexual violence.

Tone Bringa, an anthropologist from Norway, takes yet another perspective on the events in the former Yugoslavia. Her study, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, focuses on a rural village outside Sarajevo which is made up primarily of Croats and Bosnian Muslims. Her account is more distanced than the others from the topic of war and genocide, but she does this intentionally. Her goal is to show how identity is formed among a small population which is confronting both civil war and genocide. This approach is still very much a part of the discussion on the war as it is one of the few studies currently available on contemporary identity creation by individuals in a time when there is debate raging over who is allowed to assign identity. Her conclusions reinforce the idea that people will continue to determine their own identities despite government attempts to force cultural identity assignments on a given people. The *kuca*, or household, is the center of identity formation among the Bosnian Muslims, making identity a very localized phenomenon, rather than pan-Islamic or anti-Serbian/Croatian. In fact, villagers did not sharply demarcate the differences between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims as their government did. However, she notes that war has changed the ways in which people self identify; they are now turning to a wider, international Islamic community to define their own identity.

New York Times war journalist, Chuck Sudetic has written about one family and their perspective on the Srebrenica massacre in his book, *Blood and Vengeance*. In his introduction to the book he tells of how he came to write from the perspective of a single family. After talking with both Serbs and Muslims, he "realized [the Serbs'] stories dovetailed with the Muslims' and also began with memories of a time long before the war, memories of fistfights, funerals, and feasts... [of relatives] who exacted blood vengeance to appease their dead, and who suffered defeat and buried their guns for another day" (Sudetic xxxvii). Like Bringa, Sudetic describes a very localized reaction to the war and he sheds light on the ways in which people lived their everyday lives during this time. Blood vengeance in this context is based on generations, not centuries, as the popular press would have us believe. Conflicts are based on traceable historical memory, often to events that occurred during and since the second World War, not on primordial ethnic conflicts that stem from centuries old conflicts between the Ottomans and the Serbs.

Several times throughout the book, Sudetic refers to Vidovdan, the feast day of St. Vitus. This is the date of one of the most important "ethnic myths" of the Serbs. On June 28, 1389, on Vidovdan, the Ottoman Turks defeated the Serbs in the battle of Kosovo, a defeat that has figured prominently in the creation of a post-Communist, Serbian iden-

tity. However, as the studies by Bringa and Sudetic show, Muslims in Bosnia have not identified themselves with the pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic image with which the Serbian elites identify them. This ethnic myth is revived at several crucial moments in Serbian history, including the Orthodox cries for vengeance in the eighteenth century and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on Vidovdan in 1914 (Sudetic). Most recently, on the six hundredth anniversary of the battle of Kosovo, the bones of Prince Lazar, who was killed in the battle, were taken on a pilgrimage around Serbia as if, "his death would finally be avenged and he would be able to rest in peace" (79). Or, according to the interpretation provided by Katherine Verdery, the parading of these bones had a symbolic value in legitimizing the borders of the Serbian State, headed by Milosevic. In other words, this "symbolic construction," to use Kertzer's words, created a sense of unity, legitimizing the efforts of the Milosevic government to homogenize the state and avenge age-old ethnic hatreds. The rhetoric suggests the existence of nations that for centuries have not gotten along, but the empirical studies of Bosnia, outlined above, all suggest that this sense of nation is not primordial, rather it is something clearly constructed in the present.

Just as international politicians made a concentrated effort to *not* use the term genocide to describe the events in Bosnia, they are now trying not to use the term "ethnic cleansing" to describe the events in Kosovo. Many of the stories of separating families by gender, killing male prisoners, and burning villages are the similar to those from Bosnia, though General Wesley Clark and Secretary General Javier Solana use very guarded language. In the order to commence air strikes, which came on March 23, 1999, Javier Solana used terms such as "humanitarian disaster," "humanitarian catastrophe," and "human suffering . . . repression and violence against the civilian population of Kosovo" (NATO March 23). Other language has also been used, for example, "attacks on [Serbia's] own people" (NATO March 29) and the "brutal destruction of human lives and properties" (NATO April 1). One can find only an occasional reference to "ethnic cleansing" in the text of NATO press releases (NATO April 1). Moreover, ethnic cleansing was not referred to as something already in progress, rather it was mentioned as something to be prevented. According to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the act of murdering Kosovar men is murder aimed at a specific ethnic group which also has an effect on the reproductive ability of the population, forcing people from their homes and burning down villages also severely threatens the future of this population. However, the terminology of "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing" is becoming progressively more politically charged in international arenas, as Serbians claim that

as minorities outside of Serbia, they are also the victims of ethnic cleansing. For these people, rhetoric has fused with a shared historical memory and sense of vengeance to serve as legitimation for the Serbian government's actions against its minority populations.

Conclusion

Within my analysis, I have focused on more extreme examples of genocide in order to show how it is used as a tool to construct and legitimate a homogeneous nation-state. I believe that it is an important moral and ethical obligation for us to look at genocide in new ways in order to understand the logic behind the use of violence in state formation and to begin questioning "legitimacy" and "power." To borrow a phrase from Geertz, we must create a "thick description" of past and present genocides. Both Bauman and Hayden admit the difficulty of writing about a topic which is so morally offensive, but neither of them have shied away from the task. "We are caught in a trap of morality: the more actions are explainable, the less culpable they seem" (Hayden, *Slavic Review* 730). And later he states: "... I need to make it explicit that my basic goal was that proposed by Max Weber, 'to recognize 'inconvenient' facts,' meaning those that controvert comfortably established opinions, including my own" (767).

Bauman reminds us: "The Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilization and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a problem of that society, civilization and culture" (x). Both authors provide starting points for discussion, that this paper engages. Genocide is a tool, a means to an end, not an end in and of itself. The authors who have written about the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina have all given us different windows on how genocide is planned, practiced, and perceived. Milosevic has not single-handedly annihilated hundreds of thousands of Bosnians and Kosovars. The rhetoric of the victimized Serbian nation has been used at various moments in the history of Serbia and Yugoslavia, but to different ends. Analyses of the symbolic construction of power, such as those by Kertzer and Verdery provide useful directions in which to push the analyses of the Holocaust and ethnic cleansing by Bauman and Hayden. Ethnic violence at the end of the twentieth century also raises questions about the nature of state politics as communications, economies, and families become increasingly transnational.

Notes

- ¹ A phrase adapted from Milan Kundera's "evil's scandalous beauty" by Hayden (*Slavic Review* 731).
- ² The idea that environmentally threatening structures (landfill, nuclear waste facility, excessively polluting factory, etc.) are located in poorer areas with a high minority population.

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